

Lake School (Rosseau 1967), the Country Day School (King City 1972). The traditional schools retained a certain popularity through their age-old emphasis on small classes and dedicated teachers, plus the implied social advantages of children rubbing shoulders with others from privileged backgrounds. They, too, were adapting to a new generation of pupils and parents. In Hamilton, for example, the former boys-only Hillfield College and the girls-only Strathallan School amalgamated into a single co-educational entity. Curriculum innovation proceeded apace: Ashbury College with its International Baccalaureate program, Appleby College with its emphasis on environmental studies.

Given the diverse nature of both the new and the old private schools, it proved impossible to unite all of them under any one organization. The old-line schools had long had their national

organizations, split along boys' school and girls' school lines, which finally united in 1979 as the Canadian Association of Independent Schools. The Roman Catholic, Jewish, Christian Alliance, Seventh Day Adventist and Mennonite schools each had its own set of religious, educational and political priorities, and each developed its own formal or informal provincial co-ordinating groups.

By 1974, however, there was enough interest from some of the private schools to form the Ontario Alliance (later Association) of Alternative and Independent Schools. Throughout its first ten years of existence the OAAIS never enrolled the majority of private schools in its ranks. Yet by acting as a political lobby group it performed an important role in presenting a case for private schools and private school financing to the politicians and the electorate of Ontario.

V. CONCLUSION: SCHOOLS OF ONTARIO

Changing attitudes within the provincial education ministry provide part of the explanation for such rapid post-1960 growth in private schooling. Prior to the 1960s, the old Ontario Department of Education was noted for its commitment to conservatism and its extremely cautious approach to change and innovation. During that decade, however, the department underwent a radical transformation. Where new ideas had once seemed threatening, now they were welcomed.²² Greater toleration for experimentation and diversity within the public school system implied a greater range of choice in the private sector. By the end of the 1960s, private school founders and promoters found it relatively easy to obtain departmental approval for their educational plans, whatever those plans might include. "There is probably no place in the world," declared the *Free School Handbook* in 1972, "where the government provides fewer obstacles to the legal establishment of privately run schools than in Ontario."²³

Post-war immigration is another general factor in explaining the increase in private school enrolment. Some immigrant groups came from countries — Britain, Hong Kong, parts of the West Indies, for example — where traditionally the private school had been upheld as vastly superior to the low-status public school system. Other immigrant groups — members of the Dutch Reformed Church or the Jewish religion — saw their own private schools as essential in preserving particular religious and cultural values in the midst of a multicultural North American milieu. Finally, a third group of immigrants — teenagers from Hong Kong and Taiwan, for example — utilized private schools in a very pragmatic way; they flocked to the so-called "Visa" schools where English immersion classes helped prepare them for high school graduation and university entrance.

But government attitudes and immigration together cannot explain the attraction of private schools to an increasing percentage of the province's population. According to Robert Routledge, president of the OAAIS in 1976, "the overriding concern of all parents who want their children to be privately educated seems to be the belief that the public education system lacks some kind of fundamental moral content."²⁴ This moral content or commitment meant different things to different groups. Patrons of the more traditional nineteenth century boarding schools could define it as a leadership ethos. For Catholics it was a faith commitment; for supporters of Jewish schools a total commitment to the Judaic cultural heritage. Everdale Place offered a radical critique of capitalist society, whereas the more structured private schools, in the words of one principal, offered "a return to the basic firmer discipline and the setting of moral values" during a time of neo-conservatism.²⁵

In the final analysis, two forces had combined to produce this private school explosion. First, multiculturalism. The increasing ethnic and

religious diversity of Ontario's post-war population was no longer content and comfortable within the confines of a public school system that was seen as serving the cultural needs of only the traditional WASP mainstream. The valiant efforts of the public schools to incorporate multicultural diversity within curriculum offerings and classroom practices were rejected as insubstantial by those ethnic and religious groups whose cultural cohesion gave them the strength to seek educational solutions outside the public school mainstream.

The Jewish schools, for example, saw themselves as important players within a larger society whose government seemed to be increasingly recognizing Ontario as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic province. At the end of the 1960s the Ontario Committee for Government Aid to Jewish Day Schools called on the government to "ensure and encourage the development of the varied colour and fabric which constitutes the inhabitants of our Province" by providing financial assistance.²⁶ When provincial aid proved not forthcoming, the Jewish schools in North York proposed that they become alternative schools within the local public school system. In such an arrangement the state would finance the regular curriculum, with private funding for the special Judaic studies programs. Again, the public response was negative. But the Jewish efforts had raised a fundamental question: How could the delicate balance between cultural retention and cultural assimilation best be maintained — through public schools or private schools?

While the Jewish schools challenged public authorities to define the limits of multiculturalism, the Christian Alliance schools challenged the very definition of private schools. Though firmly rooted in the Calvinist tradition, and drawing clientele largely from Reformed backgrounds, the Alliance schools argued that they were public, not private, in that they were open to all children. Thus in a 1970 position paper, "A Place to Stand: A Case for Public Funds for All Public Schools," they presented their case for provincial grants and a share of local school taxes. Democracy, pluralism, freedom of choice, parental rights, the importance of competition — all were invoked to gain public support.²⁷ But Premier William Davis' 1971 answer to the Christian Alliance schools was the same as his response that year to Catholic high schools and Jewish schools: No.

If cultural pluralism was one underlying force that produced the private school explosion, then secular pluralism was the second basic factor. A wave of secular pluralism had swept through Ontario society, producing a philosophic or ideological diversity that was at least partially responsible for sending 18,545 students to non-sectarian private schools by 1983. Again, despite imaginative diversification within the public school sector, growing numbers of parents sought alternatives

FOOTNOTES

1. J. Donald Wilson, *et al.*, eds., *Canadian Education: A History* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 199.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

3. Carolyn Gossage, *A Question of Privilege: Canada's Independent Schools* (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1977), p. 41.

4. *Ibid.*; and Charles Phillips, *The Development of Education in Canada* (Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1957), p. 110.

5. R.D. Gidney, "Elementary Education in Upper Canada: A Reassessment," *Ontario History*, LXV (3), September 1973, p. 171.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-4.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 174; and Christopher John Podmore, "Private Schooling in English Canada," (McMaster University, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1965), pp. 195-6.

8. Gidney, "Elementary Education in Upper Canada", p. 184.

9. J.D. Purdy, "The English Public School Tradition in Nineteenth Century Ontario", in F.H. Armstrong, *et al.*, eds., *Aspects of Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 239.

10. Phillips, *Development of Education in Canada*, p. 377.

11. Robert M. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario 1876-1976* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 41; and Gossage, *A Question of Privilege*, p. 43.

12. G. Dickson and G.M. Adams, eds., *A History of Upper Canada College, 1829-1892* (Toronto: Rowsell and Hutchison, 1893), p. 156.

13. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario*, p. 42.

14. Purdy, "The English Public School Tradition", pp. 248-9.

15. Gossage, *A Question of Privilege*, p. 277.

16. A.G.A. Stephen, ed., *Private Schools in Canada* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1938), pp. 56-7.

17. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario*, pp. 164-77.

18. John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 284-5.

19. Claude Laing Fisher, *James Cardinal McGuigan, Archbishop of Toronto* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1948), p. 47.

20. Hugh A. Stevenson, *et al.*, eds., *The Best of Times/The Worst of Times: Contemporary Issues in Canadian Education* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p. 200.

21. Ontario Department of Education, *Living and Learning: The Report of the Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives in the Schools of Ontario* (Toronto: 1968), pp. 49, 54, 67, 96, 147, 169, 180-1.

22. Stamp, *The Schools of Ontario*, pp. 203-24.

23. *Free School Handbook* (Toronto: Mother School, n.d., c1972), unpaginated.

24. Anthony Whittingham, "Blazer Power Lives On — With a Little Less Starch," *Financial Post*, October 16, 1976, p. 15.

25. Diane Francis, "A Discredit Course in Public Education", *Maclean's*, November 13, 1978, p. T5.

26. Stevenson, *The Best of Times*, pp. 201-2.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-9.

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